

MOUNT HOLYOKESM

Exchange with the University of Bonn



RHEINISCHE FRIEDRICH-WILHELMS-UNIVERSITÄT

Info for MHC Students

Applying to Uni Bonn: After a student is selected for the exchange, she must fill out a **current** Bonn University application form that can be obtained in the Office of International Affairs. This is really just a bureaucratic formality. You have already been accepted to the program. To help you complete the application you can ask the German Studies Department for a copy of a previous student's application (also, see the Housing and Studentenwerk section of this info packet). You'll need college and high school transcripts, a few passport photos, a statement of health, and proof of your junior status from the McCulloch Center for Global Initiatives or from the Registrar's Office. Don't be surprised if during the summer, the *Akademisches Auslandsamt* (Uni Bonn's foreign student office) requests both a copy of your high school diploma and a form from your doctor, which indicates that you have had a physical in the last six months (and passed). It is also smart to obtain your immunization record from either your physician or the MHC health center.

Kaffeestunde: Kaffeestunde is held downstairs in the AAA building. Twice a week (three times a week during the orientation/Einführungskurs) they open the bottom of the Auslandsamt for two hours of coffee, tea, cookies, and chat. It is so nice to meet with other people who are going through the same thing you are. Kaffeestunde is an excellent opportunity to ask questions of the German students that work there. Herr Impekoven and Herr Gerhausen are very helpful, but are only around during their office hours. If you want to speak to one of them, it's always better to call beforehand.

However, you may want to seek out Katharina Schmitt, who is always available. These people are great resources, and so are your fellow exchange students, especially at the beginning of the year. Later on, as you settle in and figure things out, you may not feel the need to go so often, but it is nice to have it there if you want a free cup of coffee or tea, or have some random question to be answered.

Documents to travel with: Just to safeguard yourself, you should put together a folder before you travel to Germany. This folder should include the following: a copy of your passport, a copy of your immunization record, some passport photos that you will have to have taken in Germany (since you have to get different size photos than you can get in the US), copy of MHC transcript, copy of letter from Auslandsamt stating that you are receiving a stipend from Bonn. **Keep this folder as well as your passport with you at all times for the first couple of months you are in Bonn.** You will be adding to it! Things like your Anmeldung, proof of Insurance, and proof of a German bank account are very important for Bureaucratic chores! There is nothing worse than waiting in line and then not having the material

the office is asking for! It is best to have it all with you! Of course, be careful with your passport. Don't lose it!

Bureaucratic Chores: The Akademisches Auslandsamt (or AAA) will give you a pamphlet (a part of the Einführungskurs booklet) that will list a whole bunch of things you have to do. Do the following in the order they are listed.

Insurance: All students at a German university are required to have health insurance, which is necessary in order to matriculate. The AAA advises its students to get insurance from TK (Techniker Krankenkasse), and it costs less than the others. The monthly fee of approximately 57 Euro (2007) and it does pay for most medical needs (including hospital stays, etc.--it might be advantageous to inquire about what you are entitled to). Payment per month will automatically be taken from your bank account once you give them your *kontonummer* and *Bankleitzahl*. You can do that after you register for insurance! You will receive a card in the mail after you have registered.

Keep the form that states that you are insured (the form that says **Krankenversicherung der Studenten** in bold) **in your folder. Note also that MHC insurance covers students globally and it will be accepted in Bonn as well.**

Opening a Bank Account: You must open up a bank account with some traveler's checks as soon as you arrive. You will need a German bank account in order to pay your rent and your *Studiengebühren*. You can go to Sparkasse Bonn (there's one at Poppelsdorfer Platz and one right up on Buchholz Str.--convenient if you are living in Ferdinandstr. 1 or 42) and open up a "Girokonto." Sparkasse Bonn has several branches throughout Bonn (including an Friedensplatz and Thomas Mannstr.) and has the most accessible ATMs (Geldautomats). Students also do not have to pay fees for opening accounts or withdrawing or depositing money. Another option would be to open a 'Postsparkonto' at the Post Bank. The *Deutsche Bank* is your best bet. You can get an EC Karte that allows you more access to more ATMs throughout Germany and Europe (without paying a fee to use them). However, not all students get an EC card right away. You should ask before you open your account. This card is like a debit card and you can use it like a credit card in most stores. But, make sure you take the letter from the AAA that states that you receive a stipend. **After opening a bank account, make sure you keep the papers they give you in your folder!**

Housing and the *Studentenwerk*: You will be assigned to one of the university dorms. A housing questionnaire usually accompanies the Bonn

Application. Use the following info to help you fill out the questionnaire. Note that you will not be able to request a specific dorm and you may or may not be told where you will be staying before you arrive. You **MUST** arrive in Bonn on the scheduled arrival day for students participating in the *Einführungskurs* (see the section of this info packet labeled *Einführungskurs und Sprachprüfung*). You will get a letter from the AAA in the summer informing you of this date. If you don't arrive on the arrival date specified, you will end up having to do a lot of bureaucratic errands on your own. Also you might not be able to move into your dorm if you arrive late. After arriving in Bonn, go directly to the AAA. There you will find out where you are living and probably be taken there. In 2005, 2006, and 2007 MHC students were placed in three new dorms, Am Wichelshof 32, Pariser Straße and Sternenburgstraße. In the past, MHC students have been placed in either Ferdinandstr. 1 or 42. Both dorms are on the same street (Ferdinandstrasse) and located in Ippendorf. Römerlager is one of the largest dorms in Bonn. It is next to the Rhein River and is quite beautiful (spacious rooms with bathrooms, kitchenettes and large windows). One student says it's "the best dorm" in Bonn. You will have to pay a security deposit and the first month's rent right away. You can get the security deposit back before you leave Bonn, as long as you have filled out the necessary forms and have closed your bank account. When you move in and before you move out, your "Auslandsamt tutor" or your *Hausmeister* will inspect the room (THEY ARE VERY STRICT ABOUT THIS). You should ask the *Studentenwerk* about exactly what you have to do. **To have a look at the dorms in Bonn, check out this URL:**

http://www.studentenwerk-bonn.de/index.php?option=com_content&task=category§ionid=6&id=23&Itemid=213

Studentenwerk: Go to the *Studentenwerk* located at Nassestr. 11, in the same building as the Mensa (cafeteria) with your folder and at least 500 Euro cash (you can pay this using an EC card as well). This will cover your 1st month's rent and your *Kaution* (security deposit). After the first month you will pay the rent through direct withdrawal; that is, you give them your *Kontonummer* (account number) and *Bankleitzahl* and they will automatically withdraw the money from your account each month. Your rent contract can normally not be lengthened. The contracts usually end on July 31st, but you *may* be able to stay until the end of August if you pay an extra month's rent. Be sure to ask up front. If you are planning on leaving earlier than July 31st, you have to notify the *Studentenwerk* at least 6 weeks beforehand. You will have to sign a contract (Mietvertrag). **Put your copy of the Mietvertrag in your folder!**

Registering with Bonn and Getting a Visa: Within the first three weeks of your arrival in Bonn, you will have to register with the city (Anmeldung). You will need to go to the big ugly modern building in Bonn called the Stadthaus. To get to the Stadthaus you can take the 625 bus from the Hauptbahnhof in the direction of Mondorferfähre (Bussteig B2) and get off at the stop called Stadthaus. You'll just go up the stairs and it will be right there. If all else fails, don't be afraid to ask a German! Once you get in there, pull a number and wait for it to appear on the little electric sign and then go to the desk that your number corresponds with. This is hard to describe, but you'll see what I mean once you get there. This is one of the few government buildings set up functionally. Just make sure you pull a number when you get there! **Take your folder and passport!!!**

To stay in Germany longer than three months, you will need a resident permit (Aufenthaltserlaubnis). The Auslandsamt will do this for you. Just give the Auslandsamt your passport and the 50 EURO fee (2007). The AAA will take care of getting your visa for you. Just stop by the Auslandsamt 2-3 weeks later and pick up your passport (with your visa).

If you plan on getting a job (Teilstudienarbeit), you will have to get an amendment to your permit. Normally, this is given automatically, but ask! Under the regular permit, you are only allowed to work during the semester break. If you decide to tutor someone and will be paid in cash, then it doesn't matter. But if you want to work in a restaurant, etc., you'd better get the other one.

Registering with US Embassy: Also, registering with the American Embassy/consulate is a good idea. To do so, just call the consulate in Düsseldorf at 0211/470610 during any work day. They will then send you the forms to your place in Bonn. You can also write to the U.S. Consulate General at the following address:

U.S. Consulate General
Willi-Becker-Allee 10
40227 Düsseldorf
Federal Republic of Germany

Telephone: (0211) 788-8927

Fax: (0211) 788-8938

Hours:

The Consular Section is open to the public from 9:00 am to 12 noon, Monday through Friday. Closed on American and German holidays. You should also go to the U.S. Consulate if you (heaven forbid!) lose your passport or it gets stolen!

Email account: Of course, you can still use your MHC email account (or your googlemail or hotmail account) while you are in Bonn. If you would like an Uni Bonn email account as well, you cannot open up an e-mail account at the Uni Bonn until you are matriculated and receive a *Matrikelnummer*. Most likely, this will not occur until the beginning or middle of October, or as early as the end of the Einführungskurs because the AAA matriculates all of the program students at the same time, and some people don't get their insurance right away! So for about a month, you will be unable to use e-mail (for free). However, you can go to the Internet cafe in the upstairs part of the Sport Arena (if you can't find it, ask at the AAA) and use the Internet for 1,50 Euro per half hour. Just make sure you set up a web-based email account before leaving the States (it's free)- I recommend Yahoo because they are one of the fastest. GMX is a German email provider (www.gmx.de) Once you get your matriculation number take that along with you to the RHRZ (Regionales Hochschulrechenzentrum), Wegelerstrasse 6 (a couple blocks from Bushaltestelle "Beringstrasse" with the 624, 625, or 620-the AAA will give you a map). You want to walk down Beringstrasse, turn left at the Pharmazeutischens Institute and turn right immediately onto the next street. If you walk about 150 yards you will see a sign for the RHRZ. During certain hours, most likely only between 9-11:30, you can register for an e-mail account on the computer for this use. Ask anyone there and they will point you to the right computer (there is also a sign hanging over it). Fill in your name, address, Matrikelnummer, etc., print the paper out, and hand it in at Dispatch (the first door on your left as you enter the building), and they will give you your address and password. The next day you should be all set! Once you have the e-mail account you can also telnet to your account at MHC (although the connection is very slow - I would suggest you set it to automatically forward to your uni Bonn account. To do

this type: see forward at the prompt). A well kept secret is the CIP-Pool. The one for Germanistik majors (which is what you will be enrolled as) is located in the Hauptgebäude (main University building). Getting there is easy, yet it is hard to explain. Go to the Hofgarten and look at the university. On the left hand corner of the university building (a few feet from the actual corner) there is a door marked on one side "Kunsthistorisches Institut" and on the other side "Germanistisches Institut" Go through this door and on the left you will see 2 doors with windows. Go through them and to the immediate left is another door. At this door you should already see the hours of the CIP-Pool posted. After going through this door you will be in a little hallway and the CIP-Pool is on the right. However, you must first register for an account with the guy that you will either find in the office that will be directly in front of you, or in the actual comp. lab. To register, all you need is you student ID. You will need this place if you ever need to print anything (which I know you will), and it is more convenient than the RHRZ because it is actually in the main building of the Uni. Keep checking your MHC email account on webmail, since that is accessible from pretty much any computer with internet access.

Telephone: Everyone uses a "Handy" (cell phone). You should plan on buying one as soon as you arrive in Germany. The cell phone you use in the U.S. will likely not work in Germany. Ask around and talk to students about the best deal and plan (**O2** is good and **Blau** is the cheapest for "pay as you go"). Also, you may want to consider using Skype, a program for making free calls over the internet to anyone else who also has Skype. You can also buy time so that you can call landlines in the U.S. or around the world using Skype for almost nothing. Skype is free and easy to download and use, and works with most computers. For more information, see <http://www.skype.com>.

Stipend: The stipend will average out to be 500 Euro per month. You must go to the Auslandsamt during the first week of the month to pick up your 'Zettel' (receipt) for the stipend, which you then take to the University Kasse (bank) with your passport (driver's license also works if you don't feel like carrying your passport around all the time) during the time between 9am and NOON. They will tell you at the Auslandsamt how to get to the Kasse (in the Hauptgebäude). After getting a signature from the name of the person on the Zettel, the cashier will give you your money in cash, or 'Bargeld'. (perfect example of German bureaucracy). Normally, you receive the same each month, although you may occasionally get more one month and less the next month. Usually, you get more per month during the winter and 250 Euro in June. The AAA will mail you a schedule of your stipend payments.

You can also speak with Sharon Williams about the possibility of depositing the stipend directly into your account (2007).

The stipend should cover rent and insurance and food **but you should bring savings** as well. Otherwise you will wind up having to scrimp and save, which is not much fun at all. The stipend doesn't include those new pair of pants that you might want nor does it include money for social events or traveling.

Student fees: German university education is paid for by the state. You do have to pay *Studiengebühren* (student activity fees) each semester. The cost was 158 Euro in 2007. There are tuition fees starting this fall for all new German students, but it is still unclear if international students will have to pay the same fees. The *Studiengebühren* cover the all important 'Studi-ticket' which allows students to use all forms of public transportation (i.e., bus, *Strassenbahn*, *U-Bahn*) for free in the area. The ticket is a very nice thing to have, because you can use it even to travel to Köln with the slow train (the RE) for free. This also serves as your 'Studentenausweis' (student identification). This can get you discounts at a lot of things, including museums. Any other sort of school related costs will be for books or photocopies. If you want to copy a book, just borrow it from the library and take it to a local copy center in Bonn and make your copies there.

Transportation: With your Studi-ticket you can travel on any bus, *Strassenbahn*, *U-bahn*, slow train in Bonn and Köln. As public transportation stops running at about 12:50 a.m. (there are night buses, but they don't go everywhere and depending on where you live, they could take a long time) and as Bonn is relatively spread-out, a bike can be useful and can give you a bit of freedom. Bikes are relatively cheap, easy to find second-hand and EVERYONE has one! Though there is considerable rain in Bonn, there is little snow, and people ride bikes almost all year! If you ask around at the beginning of the year, you may even find one to borrow and you can visit the *Fahrradmärkte* during the fall. The last *Fahrradmarkt* is in September, so you may want to ask around for the date. Another possibility is the 'Flohmarkt' (flea market).held in the Rheinaue park the third Saturday of the months March-October. To get to Rheinaue take the *U-Bahn* in the direction to Bad Honnef and get off at the Rheinaue stop. You will walk right out into it. There is also a bike shop, "Re-cycle," on the 638 bus route.

Eating: There are a couple of options. **1.)** The cheapest way to eat is at the student cafeteria, the 'Mensa.' The one closest to the University is in Nassestr. However, if you wind up living in Ferdinandstr., the Poppeldorfer

Mensa is closer to your home. Mensa food is plain, but you are guaranteed a hot, filling meal at a very low price. They also offer vegetarian options and serve dinner. 2.) Cooking for yourself is the next cheapest alternative. It can also be a lot of fun if you cook with your friends. There are 'Lebensmittelgeschäfte' and 'Supermärkte' (grocery stores) all over town, ranging from relatively expensive to inexpensive, so shopping doesn't have to be a chore. Aldi and Plus are relatively inexpensive, Edeka and Kaisers have more of a selection and aren't badly priced, and HIT in Tannenbusch is large--much like a grocery store in the U.S. It is best to buy bread at the 'Bäckereien' since it is always fresh. Note: The 'brotchen', or rolls, are delicious, but they are usually only good the day you buy them. After that, they are like rocks! To avoid rock-like food, keep the *Brötchen* in the bag it came in and wrap that bag up with a plastic shopping bag. The outdoor 'Markt' (located on- where else - the *Marktplatz* is open every day except Sunday all year round. There you can buy fruit, vegetables, and just about anything else you might need, and you can find a lot of fruits/vegetables there that you won't find in other stores. Prices do tend to be high. Just look around for what looks best and is cheapest. The market is one of the very colorful parts of life in Bonn. Note that there is no big grocery store in the center of the city!

Nightlife in Bonn: The following are merely suggestions. You will figure out on your own what you like and don't like to do!

Bars and Cafés: A lot of dorms have their own bar night. If you are living in Ferdinandstr. 1 or 42, the bar is located in 42 and is every Thursday evening from 10pm until it dies out (it's gone as late as 6am quite a few times). Arriving later than 10pm is better. The Bar is a great way to meet people and the alcohol is really cheap. Café Blau and Café Göttlich have, although quite smoky, a good atmosphere. "Café Camu is the BEST" (quote from Soleil Sonoda, who spent 2007-2008 in Bonn). Joey's Apartment and Bla are good if you like alternative music and style. Fiddler's and James Joyce although expensive, are fun Irish pubs. Most everyone goes to Einstein's coffee shop, so check that out as well. Bagel Brothers is the best known meeting place and Ichiban Sushi Bar and Noodle Bar are also very popular among students.

Clubs: Nachtschicht, Carpe Noctem and Heimatlos are probably the most well known, but you will find the clubs in Köln (Cologne) such as "Triple A" to be a lot better.

University Parties: Different faculties of the University randomly throw huge parties that are open to all students. Make sure you ask around for the days when the *Fachschaften* sell the tickets (usually on Mondays or Tuesdays and only for one hour each day). The best way to meet Germans (!) is at these parties.

Don't forget that Köln and Düsseldorf are just a 30-45 minute train ride away! The nightlife in the ring in Köln and the Altstadt in Düsseldorf is great! Although being a part of the nightlife allows you to see current German culture, don't forget about the great museums in Bonn and the rest of the Rheinland! Rainy Sundays are perfect for exploring museums and exhibits. For the outdoors people who are looking for things right in their back yard, take a hike to Drachenfels, go to Rheinau Park, take a walk/bike ride along the Rhein, walk/bike ride through the woods of Waldau. Also, be sure to take part in the Rheinland's Karneval in February. Also, everyone should visit Bad Godesberg, only 4 minutes away by train. Don't miss Clemens August Schloss in Brühl. It's a UNESCO Heritage Site and the tours are very interesting.

Einführungskurs and Sprachprüfung (preparatory language course and language exam): You have the option of taking an introductory course to help you adjust to speaking German on a daily basis. This month long course is attended by almost all American program students and Tamkang students from Thailand/Korea who will be studying in Bonn for the year. It is a worthwhile course, with language instruction each morning, talks on German culture and history in the afternoons and weekly field trips. This month is also a great opportunity to explore and get to know your way around Bonn. The month gives you the opportunity to start meeting people, including others who are in the same position as you are. The introductory course begins in early September, and it is best to arrive just shortly beforehand, on the date designated by the AAA for the arrival of foreign students. You will be given a placement test for the Einführungskurs, to evaluate your level of proficiency. According to the results, you will be placed in one of six groups. Note: Mount Holyoke does not accept this course for credit! So, have a bit of fun, learn some stuff, relax and use this time to get oriented to the city and to meet new people. The fee for this course is 450 Euro. Some students have found the course more useful than others. Talk to your advisor to get a sense of whether you should absolutely take the course or not. Some students don't find it particularly challenging, but if you take it, you will meet other international students.

The DSH (Deutsche Sprachprüfung für Hochschulzugang - or something like that) is NOT mandatory. This is waived for program students, and as a Bonn exchange student, you fall under this category. You can, however, choose to take the test anyway, which is a good idea. Passing this national test entitles you to study in Germany just as a German student can, and serves as excellent proof of your proficiency in German. Each semester, the AAA offers a class which prepares you for the test (Lektüre und Sprachpraxis). There are four parts to the test: 1. Wiedergabe (90 Min)-you hear a text and answer questions about what was said in the text 2. Text Bearbeitung (45 Min)-you get a text in front of you, read it and answer ?s about it 3. Grammatik-grammar 4. Text Produktion-you are given a topic and are asked to write an essay about it. There is also a possibility of an oral exam. Don't worry about this test- it is actually fairly easy, especially if you take one of the prep courses offered by the AAA. The test is offered 3-4 times a year and is given at the AAA. **Note that it costs around 200 Euro to take the test.** You can take Lektüre und Sprachpraxis either semester with the test towards the end of each semester (February and Juni). I suggest taking it in the Sommersemester, because your language skills will have improved just by living in a German-speaking environment. Be aware that the class may be crowded in the summer!

Course Credit for the German Studies major/minor at MHC:

German courses taken abroad for which you wish to receive credit towards the major or minor must be approved by the German Studies Department upon your return to the college. It is important to save all course descriptions, syllabi, reading lists, exams and papers written for your course so that each course can be evaluated by the German Studies Department to determine whether or not a course (e.g., in history, politics, film, etc.) can be counted towards the minimum German major or minor. In order to receive 300-level credit in the German Studies Department for courses taken abroad, students should be prepared to present a portfolio to their German Studies Department advisor upon their return in the fall. This portfolio should include a syllabus/reading list for the course as well as copies of the paper(s) written. Only courses for which a student has written a longer seminar paper (12-15 pages in German) or several shorter papers (5-7 pages each in German) with both primary and secondary sources, will be considered for 300-level credit. You cannot receive credit at any level if you have only taken an oral exam. **Keep in close contact with your advisor(s) through E-mail.**

Types of courses: It is impossible to know in advance which courses will be available, since the *Vorlesungsverzeichnis* (course catalogue) does not come

out until a few weeks before the semester starts. More useful are the 'KVV' or 'kommentiertes Vorlesungsverzeichnis', which are course descriptions published by each department. You can get hard copies FREE from the Auslandsamt or check it out on the web → <https://basis.uni-bonn.de/>.

Note that the *Vorlesungsverzeichnis* and the *kommentierte Vorlesungsverzeichnisse* are also available online.

In the *Vorlesungsverzeichnis* there is a map of the university that is very helpful during the first few weeks. Each semester the 'Auslandsamt' posts a list of 'Vorlesungen' (lectures) with extra tutorial sessions each week, as well as special courses for program students. The 'Tutoriums' are provided on request if four or more students are interested in enrolling in a particular course and it is usually taught by a German student who is majoring in that discipline. The courses with Tutoriums are mostly liberal arts courses such as German literature, history, politics, philosophy, art history, etc.

'Vorlesungen' do not usually require as much work as seminars; you will do a good deal of reading, write short papers, do a 'Referat' and write an exam (or even take an oral exam). It depends from tutor to tutor/professor to professor, depending on who is giving the exam. Do not assume that you will get 300-level credit for such a course (200-level is more probable). It is almost certain that each semester there will be a Tutorium for a Germanistik Vorlesung, and it is a good idea to take this course. There are also 'Übungen' (often similar to 100- or 200- level courses, esp. in foreign language) which require more class participation than 'Vorlesungen' but are not as strenuous as seminars. Types of seminars are Proseminars and Hauptseminars. Proseminars are similar to 300-level courses at Mount Holyoke and Hauptseminars are graduate-level courses; you have to do lots of speaking and write longer, more frequent papers than for a Vorlesung. You are expected to write 20-25 pages for a Hauptseminar, and 10-15 for a Proseminar, although this all depends on the professor. This will be discussed and worked out between you and your professor.

What Classes to Take: This entirely depends on how many credits you need in the German major/minor or in other disciplines at MHC. If you need 300-level credit in the German Studies Department, you will most likely have to take a Seminar, and subsequently have to do a lot more work. If you have already completed two 300-level classes and anticipate that you can take the other two 300 requirements upon your return, you will not have to stress too much. (Be sure you can fill the period requirements.) Each semester you should be taking 4 classes (for 4 credits each) and a language course, for which you will not receive credit, but the German Department

strongly recommends it. (unless you pass the DSH in February, then you are no longer required to take the German as a second language course) While you are abroad you can receive no more than 32 credits a year (16 per semester) from Mount Holyoke, and no more than 2 300-level course credits for the year in German, but you can take as many courses as you want. Courses you need for your major may have to wait until senior year, although usually you will be able to find something that will fulfill some requirements. Be sure to stay in close touch with your major advisor(s) at Mount Holyoke during the year. Write as soon as you have selected your courses and contact her/him immediately if you have any questions or problems. If you keep in touch faithfully, you will avoid any credit or requirement problems when you return to MHC. Keep in touch through e-mail. Make sure you understand BEFORE you go know what type of courses you must take in order to get credit in your major field. According to Jingyi Jiang, who spent 2008-2009 in Bonn, mathematics and *Volkswirtschaftslehre* in Bonn are "very good, but very, very demanding! Analysis I for first-year mathematics students is harder than 300-level courses at MHC--no kidding!"

Registration for courses: At some point during the Einführungskurs, go to the Glaskasten (at the entrance of the Germanistik department in the 2. OG) and get a copy of das kommentierte Vorlesungsverzeichnis. Look through it and decide what you want to take. You can register for classes by submitting a form to Herr Gerkhausen. He will email all the international students about this...

Vacations and Travel: The academic calendar is much different from ours. The 'Wintersemester' runs from approximately mid-October to beginning February and the 'Sommersemester' from beginning April until the end of July. Christmas Break is about two or three weeks long and the break between semesters around 5-7 weeks. During this longer break you will most likely want to travel. Here are some options:

Airlines: Believe it or not, it is now cheaper to travel by air than by train. Cheap airlines are: HLX, German Wings, Ryan Air and Wizz Air. All of these, except for Ryan Air, fly out of Köln/Bonn Airport, and you can take the #670 bus to the airport for just 2 Euros at almost any time of day.

Train: If you prefer to travel by train, it is best to purchase a train pass, either a Eurail or InterRail Pass. The Eurail Pass must be bought in the States, so have your parents mail it to you from home. This pass is not valid in England, Scotland, or Northern Ireland. You can buy it for 3, 4, or 8 weeks. The InterRail Pass has its own set of restrictions. You must have

lived in Europe for at least six months in order to get one. Make sure you get your passport stamped when entering Germany in August. However, it covers more countries plus more ship and ferry lines than does the Eurail, although you must pay half the price of a normal ticket when traveling through the country in which you purchased the pass.

The BAHN has become much more expensive in the last two years. If you plan to do much traveling within Germany, you should buy a 'BahnCard' at the Bonn train station. It allows you to travel half-price or 75% of the normal price on any train within Germany. It is good for a year and pays for itself quickly! Otherwise train travel can get very expensive. However, pick up a copy of "Service & Preise" from the Bahnhof. It has got all the specials listed in it, including the Super-Sparpreise, Guten-Abend-Ticket and Schönes Wochenende ticket, which can always be purchased. There are also seasonal specials such as the InterRegio-SommerSpezial (good until September 30). Also, if you want to do some traveling in the beginning (i.e. during the orientation course or during the break between it and the semester beginning), ask in the Bahnhof about the ICE Tramperticket. It's an awesome deal (great if you are considering a trip to Oktoberfest). It's only good for a month. But it is usually only sold until the beginning of November. Another way to travel is by 'Mitfahrgelegenheit' (share-a-ride). (www.mitfahrgelegenheit.de) You can look for notices on the 'Schwarzes Brett' (bulletin boards) at the university for rides offered. There is also a 'Mitfahrzentrale' office across the tracks from the 'Hauptbahnhof' in Bonn. Sharing a ride is not always cheaper than the train, but it is good to know about.

Mount Holyoke College Course Catalogue-- Take one along with you or have someone send you the current copy (once you get your address here--if you send it to Joanne Picard and tell her you want it registered at MHC as your address for the year, the Registrar will send you the new catalogue for free in the Fall, and any letters that might be sent from friends or such to your MHC box will be forwarded for free to you also). It is a great reference and good reminder of what requirements you have as a German major/minor..

Baking stuff: If you enjoy baking or cooking, it might be a good idea to take along some American measuring cups and spoons with some recipes. Here in Germany, as with most of the world, they use the metric system! You'll also learn how to cook internationally!

Dorm Room: The rooms in Ferdinandstr. 1 come with: a desk, chair, drawers, lamp, table, comfy chair, bed, pillow, comforter, and a closet. A room in Ferdinandstr. 42 has a desk, a chair, a bookshelf, a night stand, a bed, and a closet with shelves on one side and hanging space on the other. I think you can basically expect from most rooms, if nothing else, a bed, desk and chair, and closet. You also get (in Ferdinandstr.1) two white sheets, pillow case, and a white comforter cover.

Final Notes: Don't expect your German to improve immediately after you arrive. You will go through periods of feeling very comfortable with the language to suddenly feeling as inadequate as ever. Try not to let that get you down, though. It takes a lot of energy and effort to carry on conversation after conversation in German, especially at first when you find yourself introducing yourself and explaining why you are in Bonn for the tenth time that day. It will get better, though, and by the second semester, you will find that handling yourself in everyday situations becomes second nature. It is a good idea to have a variety of friends: Germans (note that it is rare to get to know German in your classes), other foreign students, even Americans! Being with Americans does nothing for your German, but sometimes you need the chance to be able to say what you want the way you want to say it, and not have to feel like everything you are saying is a representation of your country. Having German friends is really one of the best ways to learn to speak German. You can also get a *Sprachtandem Partner*, a German student who wants to improve his/her English. You both meet for an hour per week and practice speaking. You speak German and your German partner speaks English (talk to the Auslandsamt for more details).

Make sure to join clubs in your dorm, the choir, "Sportvereine," theater groups, and go to dorm and 'Uni' parties. You can often also meet people in your Proseminars at the Uni! Be open to new situations and join in when you can! It is also a good idea to inform yourself about the political situation in Germany and in the U.S. The Germans are very politically aware, and it is not at all unusual for a German to ask you what your views are and then to challenge them. As an American you can expect this! Soon you will be accustomed to life in Germany, and if you keep your eyes open, welcome new experiences, and learn about German customs and ideas, your stay should be immeasurably rewarding and enjoyable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **German-Buddy Program:** Exchange students are introduced to a student at the UniBonn and they form a pair to participate many activities organized by the *Auslandsamt*. Jingyi Jiang met her best friend in Bonn through this program. They both traveled together to Croatia and China during and after her year in Bonn
- **Gastfamilie-Programm:** Exchange students are introduced to a local family. I strongly recommend this program. It will help you learn more about Germany. Jingyi Jiang loved it!
- **Germany Hands-On:** The *Auslandsamt* helps exchange students find unpaid internships. This is a very good opportunity to have something to build up your resume during your year abroad. Strongly recommended!

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